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16th February #154

New for This week

- As a user of Microsoft technologies, you are receiving this publication to stay informed about critical topics such as Microsoft licensing, price increases, end-of-life dates, technical updates, security notices, and more.
If you do not want to continue receiving TOP STORIES, click on the unsubscribe link at the bottom of the mail.
 - **Another 3 New vendors** exclaimer, **Overe.io** & **IRONSCALE** added to FirstMarketplace
 - **Microsoft EoL section Updated for January 2027 - Note the Biztalk Zombie!**
 - **Microsoft Teams Keynote at ISE** - It will be central to all your communication.
 - **Dynamics Licensing guide Feb update**- A few changes - check if you are affected
 - **CoPilot Studio Licensing Guide updated for Feb** - check to see if you can benefit
 - **M365 Gaps in your Backups** - Good idea to review your backup processes
 - **Windows 11 adds new Security Baseline** - Stops software you don't want!
 - **YouTuber got deepfaked** - He's not happy - there is a bigger lesson here
 - **OpenCLaw caused a MAC shortage** - Never fear you NVIDIA GPU will also run it
 - **CoPilot is actually useful in Excel** - 11 Cool things you can do
 - **Panther Lake Delivers** - It's early days, but now we're starting to see real reviews.
 - **Dell is back with XPS** - with Panther Lake and a great review!
 - **Maximum resolution of the Human eye and choice of display** - [document here](#)
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Microsoft End of Life to January 2027

Summary of what to know up to January 2027.

Click above for the highlights. The detailed PDF to download is at the bottom.

Intel's Panther Lake

DRAM prices have already tripled.

Read how Intel's Panther Lake changes the game now that CES is done.

TOP STORIES #153

Click button above for last weeks news.

Price increases hit SA IT Hard

Visit FirstMarketPLace

exclaimer, Overe & IRONSCALE have been added for this week. See below for LinkedIn

Movie releases

Get all the releases for the next 4 weeks in South Africa.
Coming up: "Hoppers"
Next big movie for 2026 is "Hail Mary".

Upcoming Shows

Review what happened at CES and see links for NAMM 2026 ISE has wrapped, it was big, and even Microsoft was there with Teams!

Our LinkedIn

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Microsoft News This Week

Microsoft Teams Keynote at ISE

Ilya Bukshsteyn's keynote explained that AI in Teams is no longer just about meeting notes — it's about multiplying what every person can achieve.

Microsoft is positioning Teams as the hub for human-to-human, human-to-agent, and agent-to-agent collaboration, with a wave of updates such as:

- **Real-time interpreter is now available in Teams Phone calls**, not just meetings
Including voice cloning so the interpreter sounds like you.
- **Express Enrolment**: one-click voice and face enrolment for AI recognition
No more digging through settings
- **The Meet app is becoming the Events app**
One place to create, discover, and manage Town Halls and events across your organisation

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our Teams specialists to help take you through all the changes that are coming from Microsoft for Teams. It is important to have regular update sessions!!!

Microsoft ISE 2026 Teams Fireside chat

Dynamics Licensing guide updated for February

There are new Dynamics 365 licensing resources available from February 2026. The Dynamics 365 Licensing Guide now includes a new section on the Dynamics variant of the MCP Server, explaining which Dynamics 365 licences include access to these capabilities, enabling AI tools to work with enterprise data.

The guide also adds clarification on capability and licensing nuances when integrating Dynamics 365 Field Service with Project Operations. Lastly, it has been updated to reflect the End of Sale of Commerce Recommendations and Commerce Ratings.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our Microsoft Dynamics specialists to ensure that you understand if and how you are affected by these changes and how best to take advantage (or not) of them!

Dynamics 365 Licensing Guidance

Copilot Studio Licensing Guide February 2026

Microsoft have published an updated Copilot Studio Licensing Guide for February 2026. It now includes the Agent Pre-Purchase Plan as an additional way to buy Copilot Credits, delivered as an Azure reservation that bundles Copilot Credits with Microsoft Foundry services.

The guide also now signposts the Dynamics 365 Licensing Guide, so you can confirm which Dynamics 365 licences include Copilot Credits. Content covering Code Interpreter, Multi-Agent Orchestration, and Bring Your Own Model has been removed from the Licensing Guide and moved into Microsoft Learn documentation.

Please contact your First Technology Group Account Manager to connect you with our Copilot and Dynamics specialists to help you understand how you are affected and how you can take advantage of these changes.

CoPilot Studio Licensing Guide

Microsoft 365 Backup Gaps Persist

Microsoft Infrastructure availability does not replace your companies responsibility for backing up your own data. The retention policies that Microsoft has in place are for compliance purposes and are NOT operational restoration processes. There are even aspects of 365 that are difficult to back up and almost impossible to restore! It's important to know where there are challenges and how you get around them.

Please contact your First Technology Group Account Manager to connect you with our M365 backup specialists who can help ensure you have the correct backup and restore strategies in place for ALL aspects of how you use M365

M365 Backups - Not so Simple

Redmond
Bringing 2018(ish) backup into 2026...and common misconceptions

- The Growth of the Cloud**
 - 100 PB of content/month in 2021
 - 2.5B files/day
 - Storage Problem → Performance, Cost Problem
 - ~155M active users → 430M paid commercial seats
- Backup Strategies**
 - Servers/hardware → Data and configurations
 - Attack strategies and targets:**
 - On-Premises vs. Online
 - Sophistication of attacks
 - AI
- Common Misconceptions**
 - "Microsoft takes care of it for me"**
Microsoft provides infrastructure uptime, not your data backup
 - "Retention = Backup"**
Retention policies preserve data for compliance, not for restore

Security



Windows 11 Adds new Secure mode

Microsoft is making it harder for changes to your operating system to slip through the cracks. Microsoft is rolling out Baseline Security Mode in stages, but it is important to be aware of these changes and know how to manage them in your business.

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our security specialists to help ensure you are making sure you are implementing these changes securely.

Microsoft Adds a New Secure Mode

DeepFakes get scary - YouTuber gets deepfaked

The really scary thing about this is that this is just the beginning!

This is a relatively small channel following the Ukraine war, but he has still been quite effectively deep-faked - you should watch his video below.

The implications for the future are mind-blowing. How will somebody deepfake you, an executive at your company, or even somebody important in your country, with devastating consequences?

It is critical that you stay up to date on how to spot the tell-tales, which will get increasingly harder to spot, and then how to verify that you ARE looking at and talking to the real person.

Have you considered "safe words"? How do you make sure you have a "safety catch"? PLEASE contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our training specialists to help ensure everybody is kept up to date to handle the latest trickery.

YouTuber DeepFaked

OpenClaw Causes a MAC shortage

The immense popularity of OpenClaw has resulted in lead times of MAC's with lots of memory being stretched to 6 weeks! This shortage has appeared out of nowhere, driven by the demand for MACs ideally suited to running these AI models because of their unique memory architecture. If you have an NVIDIA GPU, don't despair, NVIDIA has published a guide on how to get it running on your GPU.

OpenClaw remains a security nightmare, so please contact your First Technology pGroup account manager to connect you with our Security specialists in helping ensure that OpenClaw does not appear in your corporate environment in any way and then with our AI specialists start engaging on how to safely start working out how to accommodate this and where it fits (or not) into the CoPilot ecosystem which IS secure from it's inception.

OpenClaw causes MAC shortage

NVIDIA OpenClaw installation Guide

Cloud & AI

11 cool things CoPilot can do in Excel

Microsoft's AI tool is genuinely becoming useful for Excel, helping you become an Excel wizard without having to learn how to enter complex formulas or macros. Soon, we will ALL be Excel wizards!

Computerworld has published a good guide to help you get started.

11 Cool things in Excel

Please contact your First Technology Group account manager to connect you with our AI specialists to start working on how you get CoPilot deployed in your environment and to see how you can start using CoPilot in Excel to make a difference in how you work. For many, this capability alone may justify the cost of CoPilot!



Panther Lake Delivers

Panther Lake is delivering performance similar to what was promised at CES 2026.

A review of the Lenovo and the Intel Core Ultra X9 has been posted, and the results are positive. A review of the Dell XPS notebook has also just been posted. Of course these CPU's will have to contend with AMD's Ryzen AI 400 CPU's which are also giving really good results

and will probably compete well on price.

You may also notice the minimum RAM configuration for the Lenovo is 32Gig.

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to explore different options for your users and help save on costs, combat rising prices and shortages.

When your usual notebooks are out of stock, maybe other form factors and even those with AMD CPU's will need more serious consideration!

[Lenovo Ideapad 5 Pro Review](#)

[Lenovo Yoga mini i](#)

Dell is back with XPS

Notebookcheck has published a review that clearly acknowledges that Dell is back with a solid re-design incorporating the new Panther Lake CPU from Intel. This is again a confirmation that planning for new hardware has to be revisited taking into consideration these new notebooks. At the same time, because of shortages and price increases, it is critical to be more flexible with the models and types you are willing to buy, or you could end up paying a LOT and waiting a long time!

Please contact your First Technology account manager to connect you with our hardware specialists to assist in writing these new specifications to ensure you get the maximum value for every \$ you spend.

[Dell XPS is back](#)

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